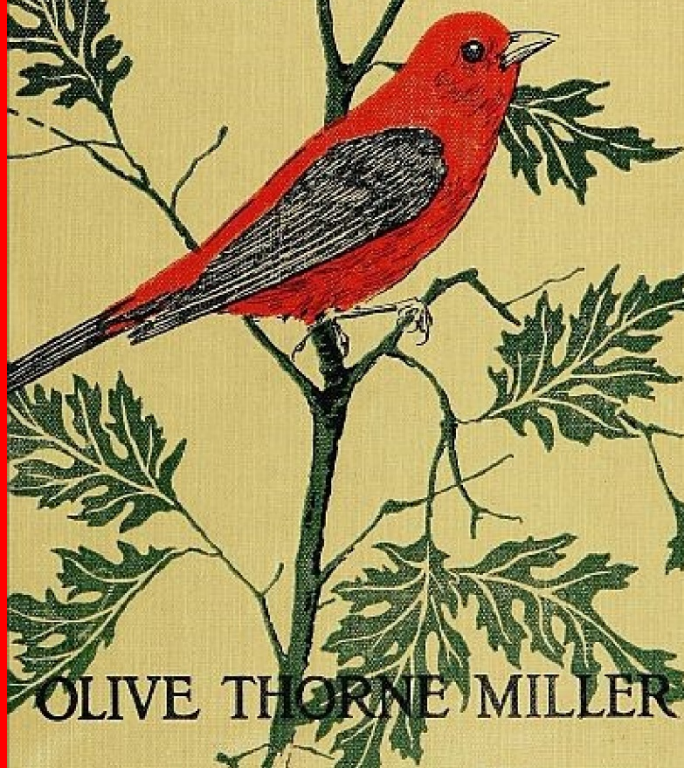


THE CHILDREN'S
BOOK of BIRDS



OLIVE THORNE MILLER

This is an ornithology book
Based on the public domain work by
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BARN SWALLOW

WHEN THEY COME IN THE SPRING

In the long, cold winter of the New England and Middle States, not many birds are usually seen. In the cities there is always the English sparrow, and in the country, now and then a chickadee, or a woodpecker, or a small flock of goldfinches. But very early in the spring, long before grass is green, even while snow is on the ground, the birds begin to come.

Some morning a robin will appear, standing up very straight on a fence or tree, showing his bright red breast and black cap, flirting his tail, and looking as if he were glad to be back in his old home.

Then perhaps the same day will come the hoarse chack of a blackbird, and two or three will fly over and alight in a big bare tree, looking, it may be, for a good place to build a bird city. Soon will be heard the sweet little song of the song sparrow or the bluebird, and then we shall know that summer is coming, for these are the first birds of spring.

Day after day, as the snow melts away and the sunshine grows hotter, more birds will come. One day a catbird or two, another day an oriole in black and gold, and another day a pert little wren. So, it will go on, till by the time June comes in, all our birds will be back with us, very busy, hopping around in our bushes and trees, making their nests all about, and singing the whole day long.

Almost the first thing every bird thinks of, when he comes to us, is making the nest. For summer is the only time in his life that a bird has a home.

He does not need a house to live in. He cares nothing for a roof to cover him, because when the sun is hot, he has the broad green leaves on the trees to shade him. And when it rains his neat feather coat is like a waterproof raincoat that lets the drops run off, leaving him warm and dry under it. He does not need a dining-room, because he eats wherever he finds his food, and he wants no kitchen, because he prefers his food raw.

He has no use for a bedroom, because he can sleep on any twig; the whole world is his bedroom. He cares nothing for closets and bureaus, because he has only one suit of clothes at a time, and he washes and dries that without taking it off.

He wants no fire to keep him warm, for when it is too cold he spreads his wings and flies to a warmer place. A bird has really no need of a house, excepting when he is a baby, before his eyes are open, or his feathers have come, or his wings have grown. While he is blind, naked, and hungry, he must have a warm, snug cradle.

So when the bird fathers and mothers come in the spring the first thing they do is to find good places and build nice cradles, for they are very fond of their little ones. They spend the spring and summer in working for them, keeping them warm, feeding them till they are grown up, and then teaching them to fly and to take care of themselves, so that when summer is gone they will be ready to go with the other birds to their winter home.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

The rich, whistling song of the ***Baltimore Oriole***, echoing from treetops near homes and parks, is a sweet sign of spring in the eastern part of North America.

Look way up to find these singers. The male's bright orange feathers shine like the sun from high branches, like a spotlight at full power.

Nearby, you might see the female weaving her remarkable hanging nest from slender fibers.

Fond of fruit and nectar as well as insects, Baltimore Orioles are easily lured to backyard feeders.



REDSTARTS (FEMALE ON NEST)

Adult male American **Redstarts** are mostly black with bright orange patches on the sides, wings, and tail. The belly is white. Females and young males replace the orange with yellow or yellow-orange.



They have gray head and underparts, with olive back and wings and a dark-gray tail.

American Redstarts are very active eaters of insects. They seem to never stand still.

They quickly spread their wide tails, showing the orange or yellow in a quick flash, which often scares their insect prey into running away. Then the redstart darts after it, trying to catch it in the air.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

The ***Ruby-throated Hummingbird*** is a small hummingbird with a slender, slightly down-curved bill and short wings that don't reach all the way to the tail when the bird is sitting. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are bright emerald or golden-green on the back and top of their head, with gray-white chest. Males have a brilliant shiny red throat that looks dark when it's not in good light.



Ruby-throated Hummingbirds fly straight and fast but can stop instantly, hover, and adjust their position up, down, or backwards with easy control. They often visit hummingbird feeders and tube-shaped flowers and defend these food sources against other birds. You may also see them plucking tiny insects from the air or from spider webs.

YOUNG WOOD THRUSH

The **Wood Thrush's** pot-bellied body, short tail, straight bill, big head, and upright sitting give it the look of a smaller American Robin. Wood Thrushes are warm reddish-brown on top and white with bold black spots on their belly. Young ones show a less clear version of the same pattern.

All have a bold, white eye ring. The shy Wood Thrush hops through fallen leaves on the forest floor, probing for insects,



bobbing upright between spurts of digging and leaf-turning. The male's clear, flute-like song echoes through the forest in spring and

early summer, and both sexes make distinctive, machine-gun-like alarm notes.

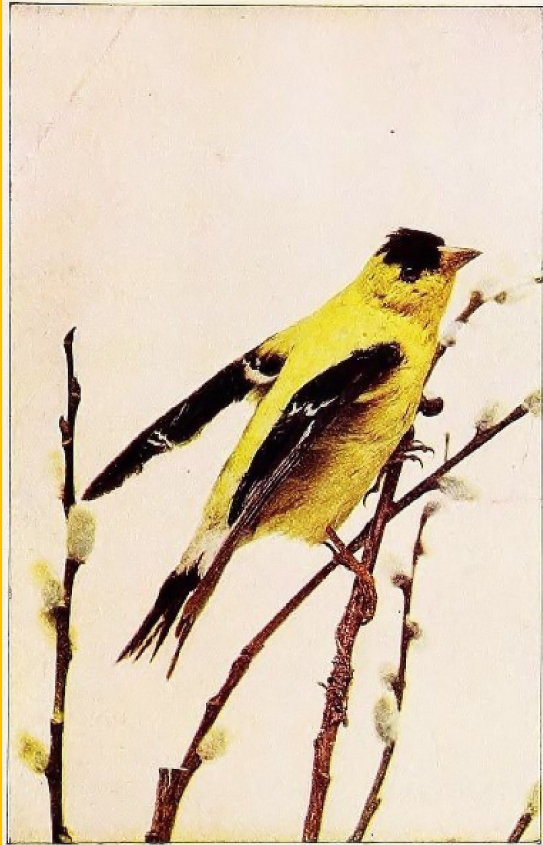
The Wood Thrush has baby chicks at the end of the growing season in the forests of the eastern U.S. where there are large trees, shade, and lots of fallen leaves when searching for food. They winter in lowland tropical forests in Central America.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

This handsome little finch, the state bird of New Jersey, Iowa, and Washington, is welcome and common at feeders, where it likes to eat sunflower seeds.

Spring males are brilliant yellow and shiny black with a bit of white. Females and all winter birds are more dull but identifiable by their conical bill; pointed, notched tail; wing bars; and lack of streaking.

To encourage goldfinches into your yard, plant native thistles and other composite plants, as well as native milkweed. Almost any kind of bird feeder may attract American Goldfinches, including hopper, platform, and hanging feeders, and these birds don't mind feeders that sway in the wind. You'll also find American Goldfinches are happy to feed on the ground below feeders, eating spilled seeds.



BLUEBIRD

Most of the country car drives during an eastern North American summer will turn up a few Eastern Bluebirds sitting on telephone wires or perched atop a nest box, calling out in a short, wavering voice or abruptly dropping to the ground after



an insect. Marvelous birds to see in your binoculars, male Eastern Bluebirds are a brilliant royal blue on the back and head, and warm red-brown on the breast. Blue tinges in the wings and tail give the grayer females an elegant look. This species may visit backyards if food is offered. It doesn't often come to feeders, unless you have feeders that provide mealworms. Eastern Bluebirds are a great prospect for nest

boxes if you have the space to put one up in your yard. Consider putting up a nest box to attract a breeding pair. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season. Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young.

INDIGO-BIRD

Indigo Buntings are small (roughly sparrow-sized), stocky birds with short tails and short, thick, conical bills. In flight, the birds appear plump with short, rounded tails. A breeding male Indigo Bunting is blue all over, with slightly richer blue on his head and a shiny, silver-gray bill. Females are basically

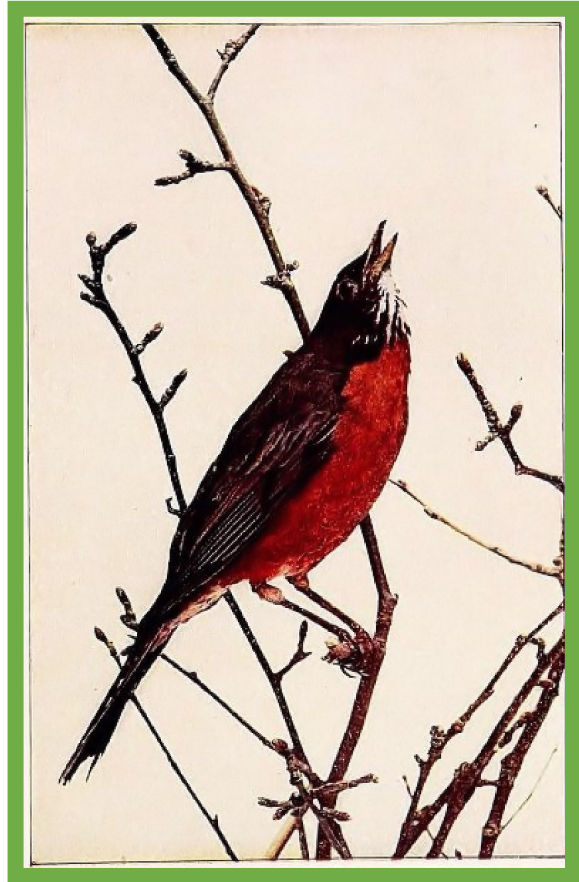


brown, with faint streaking on the breast, a whitish throat, and sometimes a touch of blue on the wings, tail, or rump. Immature males are patchy blue and brown. Male Indigo Buntings sing from treetops, shrubs, and telephone lines all summer. This species eats insects, seeds, and berries, and can be attracted to backyards with thistle or other seeds. While perching, they often swish their tails from side to side. Fairly solitary during breeding season, Indigo Buntings form large flocks during migration and on their wintering grounds.

AMERICAN ROBIN

American Robins are common sights on lawns across North America, where you often see them tugging earthworms out of the ground. Robins are popular birds for their warm orange breast, cheery song, and early appearance at the end of winter.

Though they're familiar town and city birds, American Robins are at home in wilder areas, too, including mountain forests and Alaskan wilderness. Consider putting up a nest box to attract a breeding pair. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season. An American Robin can produce three successful broods in one year. On average, though, only 40 percent of nests



successfully produce young. Only 25 percent of those fledged young survive to November. From that point on, about half of the robins alive in any year will make it to the next. Despite the fact that a lucky robin can live to be 14 years old, the entire population turns over on average every six years.

CHEWINK, OR TOWHEE

A strikingly marked, oversized sparrow of the East, feathered in bold black and warm reddish-browns – if you can get a clear look at it. Their chewink calls let you know how common they are, but many of your sightings end up mere glimpses through tangles of little stems. Eastern Towhees are likely to visit – or perhaps live in – your yard if you’ve got brushy, shrubby, or overgrown borders. If your feeders are near a vegetated edge, towhees may venture out to eat fallen seed. This species often



comes to bird feeders. The Eastern Towhee and the very similar Spotted Towhee of western North America used to be considered the same

species, the Rufous-sided Towhee. The two forms still occur together in the Great Plains, where they sometimes interbreed. This is a common evolutionary pattern in North American birds – a holdover from when the great ice sheets split the continent down the middle, isolating birds into eastern and western populations that eventually became new species.

HOUSE WREN

A plain brown bird with an effervescent voice, the House Wren is a common backyard bird over nearly the entire Western Hemisphere. Listen for its rush-and-jumble song in summer. House Wrens will gladly use nestboxes, or you may find their twig-filled nests in old cans, boots, or boxes lying around in your garage. It breeds from Canada through the West Indies and Central America, southward to the southernmost point of South America. For House Wren eggs, temperature inside the nest box can be critical to survival. If a sun-drenched nest box warms above about 106 degrees Fahrenheit for an hour, the eggs will begin to die. If a cold snap chills a nest below about 65 degrees Fahrenheit for more than a day it can also doom the eggs.



FLICKER

Northern Flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. On walks, don't be surprised if you scare one up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. When they fly you'll see a flash of color in



the wings – yellow if you're in the East, red if you're in the West – and a bright white flash on the rump. Northern Flickers don't habitually visit bird feeders, but you can find

them in backyards and at bird baths. Although it can climb up the trunks of trees and hammer on wood like other woodpeckers, the Northern Flicker prefers to find food on the ground. Ants are its main food, and the flicker digs in the dirt to find them. It uses its long barbed tongue to lap up the ants. Northern Flickers generally nest in holes in trees like other woodpeckers. Occasionally, they've been found nesting in old, earthen burrows vacated by Belted Kingfishers or Bank Swallows.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH

The largest nuthatch, this is still a small bird with a large head and almost no neck. The tail is very short, and the long, narrow bill is straight or slightly upturned. White-breasted Nuthatches are gray-blue on the back, with a frosty white face and underparts. The black or gray cap and neck frame the face and make it look like this bird is wearing a hood. The lower belly and under the tail are often chestnut. Like other nuthatches, they often turn sideways and upside down on vertical surfaces as they forage. They don't lean against their tails the way woodpeckers do. White-breasted Nuthatches are birds of mature woods and woodland edges. They're particularly associated with deciduous stands, including maple, hickory, basswood, and oak, though they can be found in some coniferous forests.



LESSER YELLOWLEGS

A slender and elegant, medium-sized shorebirds with long legs and a long neck. The bill is straight and thin, only slightly longer than the bird's head (shorter and straighter than Greater Yellowlegs' bill). Breeding Lesser Yellowlegs are grayish brown birds with vivid yellow legs. They have fine, gray streaking across the head and neck, a white eyering, and white spots on the back and wings. Nonbreeding birds are



more subdued gray-brown with less streaking and spotting. Bill is entirely dark.

The Lesser Yellowlegs has a graceful, high-stepping gait as it moves deftly across mudflats and marshes. Flight is buoyant and relaxed, with legs extending beyond the tail. Wetland habitats ranging from tidal flats to sewage ponds to flooded fields; often in the company of other shorebird species. Breeds in open forests and meadows interspersed with marshes and bogs.

BROWN THRASHER

It can be tricky to glimpse a Brown Thrasher in a tangled mass of shrubbery, and once you do you may wonder how such a boldly patterned, gangly bird could stay so hidden. Brown Thrashers wear a somewhat severe expression thanks to their heavy, slightly downcurved bill and staring yellow eyes, and they are the only thrasher species east of Texas. Brown Thrashers are exuberant singers, with one of the largest repertoires of any North American songbird. Brown Thrashers may come to backyards if food is offered. Sometimes they visit feeders or the ground below to pick up fallen seed. Brown Thrashers are accomplished songsters that may sing more than 1,100 different song types. The Brown Thrasher is considered a short-distance migrant, but two individuals have been recorded in Europe: one in England and another in Germany.



BLACK AND WHITE WARBLERS

Black-and-white Warblers are medium-sized warblers (small songbirds). They have a fairly long, slightly downcurved bill. The head often appears somewhat flat and streamlined, with a short neck. The wings are long and the tail is short. These birds are boldly striped in black and white. Their black wings are highlighted by two wide, white wing bars. Adult males have more obvious black streaking, particularly on the underparts and the cheek. Females (especially immatures) are paler, with less streaking and usually a wash of buff on the flanks. The undertail coverts have distinctive large black spots. Black-and-white Warblers act more like nuthatches than warblers, foraging for hidden insects in the bark of trees by creeping up, down, and around branches and trunks. Despite their arboreal foraging habits, they nest on the ground at the bases of trees.



CEDAR-WAXWING

The Cedar Waxwing is a medium-sized, sleek bird with a large head, short neck, and short, wide bill. Waxwings have a crest that often lies flat and droops over the back of the head.

The wings are broad and pointed, like a starling's. The tail is fairly short and square-tipped.

Cedar Waxwings are pale brown on the head and chest fading to soft gray on the wings.



The belly is pale yellow, and the tail is gray with a bright yellow tip. The face has a narrow black mask neatly outlined in white. The red waxy tips to the wing feathers are not always easy to see.

Look for Cedar Waxwings in woodlands of all kinds, and at farms, orchards, and suburban gardens where there are fruiting trees or shrubs. Cedar Waxwings are social birds that you're likely to see in flocks year-round.

SCARLET TANAGER

Scarlet Tanagers are medium-sized songbirds with fairly stocky proportions. They have thick, rounded bills suitable both for catching insects and eating fruit. The head is fairly large and the tail is somewhat short and broad. In spring and summer, adult males are an unmistakable, brilliant red with black wings and tails. Females and fall immatures are olive-



yellow with darker olive wings and tails. After breeding, adult males molt to female-like plumage, but with black wings and tail. Primarily insectivorous during the summer, Scarlet

Tanagers also eat fruit during migration and on the wintering grounds. They spend much of their time skulking among the wide leaves of deciduous trees in the forest canopy, where they are hard to see. They sing a burry, rambling song and give a distinctive, harsh chick-burr call. Scarlet Tanagers breed in deciduous and mixed deciduous-evergreen forests in eastern North America. They are somewhat sensitive to habitat fragmentation, so look for them in large, undisturbed tracts of forest. During migration, they move through a broader variety of forest and shrubby habitats, as well as backyards.

HERMIT THRUSH

Hermit Thrushes have a chunky shape similar to an American Robin, but smaller. They stand upright, often with the slender, straight bill slightly raised. Like other thrushes, the head is round and the tail fairly long. The Hermit Thrush is rich brown on the head and back, with a distinctly warm, reddish tail. The underparts are pale with distinct spots on the throat and smudged spots on the breast. With a close look you may see a thin pale eye ring (not a bold one). Hermit Thrushes hop and scrape in leaf litter while foraging. They perch low to the ground on fallen logs and shrubs, often wandering into open areas such as forest clearings or trails. Sometimes a Hermit Thrush will cock its tail and bob it slowly, while flicking its wings. Look for Hermit Thrushes in forest understories, especially around edges or openings.



RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are olive-green birds with a prominent white eye ring and white wingbar. This wing bar contrasts with an adjacent blackish bar in the wing. The “ruby crown” of the male is only occasionally visible. These are restless, acrobatic birds that move quickly through foliage, typically at lower and middle levels.



They flick their wings almost constantly as they go. Ruby-crowned Kinglets breed in tall, dense conifer forests

such as spruce, fir, and tamarack. In winter and during migration, also look for them in shrubby habitats, deciduous forests, parks, and suburbs.

Another species is the Ruby-throated kinglet. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet is a tiny bird that lays a very large clutch of eggs—there can be up to 12 in a single nest.

Although the eggs themselves weigh only about a fiftieth of an ounce, an entire clutch can weigh as much as the female herself.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES

A bird almost universally considered “cute” thanks to its oversized round head, tiny body, and curiosity about everything, including humans. The chickadee’s black cap and bib; white cheeks; gray back, wings, and tail; and whitish underside with buffy sides are distinctive. Its habit of investigating people and everything else in its home territory, and quickness to discover bird feeders, make it one of the first birds most people learn.

Chickadees are one of the easiest birds to attract to feeders, for suet, sunflower, and peanuts. They don’t mind using tiny hanging feeders that swing in the wind, and also readily visit window feeders. Planting willow, alder, and birch trees provides future nesting habitat for chickadees. The Black-capped Chickadee hides seeds and other food items to eat later. Each item is placed in a different spot and the chickadee can remember thousands of hiding places. Because small songbirds migrating through an unfamiliar area often associate with chickadee flocks, watching and listening for chickadee flocks during spring and fall can often alert birders to the presence of interesting migrants.



BROWN CREEPER

Brown Creepers are tiny yet lanky songbirds. They have long, spine-tipped tails, slim bodies, and slender, decurved bills. Streaked brown and buff above, with their white underparts usually hidden against a tree trunk, Brown Creepers blend easily into bark. Their brownish heads show a broad, buffy stripe over the eye (supercilium). Brown Creepers search for small insects and spiders by hitching upward in a spiral around tree trunks and limbs. They move with short, jerky motions



using their stiff tails for support. To move to a new tree, they fly weakly to its base and resume climbing up. Brown Creepers sing a high, warbling song; they also give a high, wavering call note that sounds similar to that of a Golden-crowned Kinglet. Brown Creepers breed primarily in mature evergreen or mixed evergreen-deciduous forests. You can find them at many elevations, even as high as 11,000 feet at treeline in the West. In the winter season, the species moves into a broader variety of forests and becomes much easier to find in deciduous woodlands.

CATBIRD

A medium-sized, slender songbird with a long, rounded, black tail and a narrow, straight bill. Catbirds are fairly long legged and have broad, rounded wings. Catbirds give the impression of being entirely slaty gray. With a closer look you'll see a small black cap, blackish tail, and a rich rufous-brown patch under the tail. Catbirds are secretive but energetic, hopping and fluttering from branch to branch through tangles of vegetation. Singing males sit atop shrubs and small trees. Catbirds are reluctant to fly across open areas, preferring quick, low flights over vegetation. Look for Gray Catbirds in dense tangles of shrubs, small trees, and vines, along forest edges, streamside thickets, old fields, and fence rows. Catbirds usually don't repeat phrases. Females sing infrequently, and when they do, their songs are sung more quietly.



AMERICAN DIPPER

A chunky bird of western streams, the American Dipper is North America's only truly aquatic songbird. It catches all of its food underwater in swiftly flowing streams by swimming and walking on the stream bottom.

The American Dipper chooses a nest site, invariably along a stream, that provides security from floods and predators.



Availability of suitable nest sites appears to limit its populations.

To be able to survive in cold waters during the winter, the American Dipper has a

low metabolic rate, extra oxygen-carrying capacity in its blood, and a thick coat of feathers.

Unlike most other songbirds, but similarly to ducks, the American Dipper molts its wing and tail feathers all at once in the late summer. The bird is flightless during this time.

The oldest American Dipper was over 8 years old, when it was recaptured and rereleased during a banding operation in South Dakota.

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT

An unassuming bird with plain buffy plumage, Sprague's Pipit possesses an amazing song flight, hovering on rapidly fluttering wings high above its territory, singing a lovely, downward-swirling song during bursts of gliding. When not singing, this species is very difficult to find in its prairie and grasslands habitats, often not seen until it flushes from nearly underfoot.

Because Sprague's Pipit relies on native prairie and grasslands,



its populations have declined tremendously as a result of the destruction of these habitats across interior North America.

John James Audubon was the first naturalist to describe Sprague's Pipit. He named it after his friend, Isaac Sprague, who discovered the first nest of the species near Fort Union, North Dakota, in June 1843. Displaying males often remain airborne for half an hour. In one case, a male Sprague's Pipit was observed displaying for 3 hours before descending to the ground. No other bird species is known to perform such prolonged displays.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

Chats are small songbirds but are large and bulky compared to other warblers. They have a long tail, large head and a relatively thick, heavy bill. Chats are olive-green above with a bright yellow breast and bold face markings. The face is gray, with a white eye ring that connects to the bill, forming “spectacles.” They also have a white malar or mustache stripe bordering the cheek. The lower belly is white. These are loud birds that tend to skulk in low, thick brush. In spring, males may sing from an exposed perch, but otherwise these birds typically stay well hidden. Yellow-breasted Chats live in thickets and other dense, regrowing areas such as bramble bushes, clearcuts, powerline corridors, and shrubs along streams.



YELLOW-THROATED VIREO

Yellow-throated Vireos are small songbirds, but they are chunky, with a big head, thick bill, and short tail. Males and females look as if they are wearing bright yellow spectacles on their olive-green head. The throat and chest match their spectacles, but the lower belly is bright white. Two white bars mark the gray wings. Forages in middle and upper stories of forests, gleaning insects off trunks, branches, and leaves. Tends to forage in the interior parts of trees, particularly on bare branches. Moves slowly from place to place and searches for a relatively long time from one spot. Breeds in deciduous forests and is often more common near forest edges with an open understory. Winters in a range of habitats from dry tropical forest to rainforest up to 6,000 feet.



LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Loggerhead Shrikes are thick-bodied songbirds. They have large, blocky heads and a thick bill with a small hook. The tail is fairly long and rounded. The Loggerhead Shrike is a gray bird with a black mask and white flashes in the black wings.

The gray head contrasts with the wide, black mask, black bill, and white throat. The tail is black with white corners; the



wings are black with white at the base of the primaries that form a small “handkerchief” spot when the wing is closed and larger white patches in flight.

Juveniles have darker barring

above and below. Loggerhead Shrikes sit on low, exposed perches and scan for rodents, lizards, birds, and insects.

They eat smaller prey (such as ground beetles) right away, but they are famous for impaling larger items on thorns or barbed wire to be eaten later. The species often hovers. When flying it uses bursts of very rapid wingbeats.

SCARLET TANAGER

Scarlet Tanagers are medium-sized songbirds with fairly stocky proportions. They have thick, rounded bills suitable both for catching insects and eating fruit. The head is fairly large and the tail is somewhat short and broad. In spring and summer, adult males are an unmistakable, brilliant red with black wings and tails. Females and fall immatures are olive-yellow with darker olive wings and tails. After breeding, adult males molt to female-like plumage, but with black wings and tail.

Primarily insectivorous during the summer, Scarlet Tanagers also eat fruit during migration and on the wintering grounds. They spend much of their time skulking among the wide leaves of deciduous trees in the forest canopy, where they are hard to see.

Scarlet Tanagers breed in deciduous and mixed deciduous-evergreen forests in eastern North America.



ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are stocky, medium-sized songbirds with very large triangular bills. They are broad-chested, with a short neck and a medium-length, squared tail. Adult males are black-and-white birds with a brilliant red chevron extending from the black throat down the middle of the breast. Females and immatures are brown and heavily streaked, with a bold whitish stripe over the eye. Males flash pink-red under the wings; females flash yellowish. Both sexes show white patches

in the wings and tail. The sweet, rambling song of a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak is a familiar voice of eastern forests; their sharp “chink” calls are also very distinctive. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks breed in eastern forests; you can find them among both deciduous trees and conifers.



CARDINAL

The Northern Cardinal is a fairly large, long-tailed songbird with a short, very thick bill and a prominent crest. Cardinals often sit with a hunched-over posture and with the tail pointed straight down. Male cardinals are brilliant red all over, with a reddish bill and black face immediately around the bill.

Females are pale brown overall with warm reddish tinges in the wings, tail, and crest. They have the same black face and red-orange bill. Northern Cardinals tend to sit low in shrubs and trees or forage on or near the ground, often in pairs. They are common at bird feeders but may be inconspicuous away from them, at least until you learn their loud, metallic chip note. Look for Northern Cardinals in inhabited areas such as backyards, parks, woodlots, and shrubby forest edges.

Northern Cardinals nest in dense tangles of shrubs and vines.



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

A stocky, broad-shouldered blackbird with a slender, conical bill and a medium-length tail. Red-winged Blackbirds often show a hump-backed silhouette while perched; males often sit with tail slightly flared. Male Red-winged Blackbirds are hard to mistake. They're an even glossy black with red-and-yellow shoulder badges. Females are crisply streaked and dark brownish

overall, paler on the breast and often show a whitish eyebrow. Male Red-winged Blackbirds do everything they can to get noticed,



sitting on high perches and belting out their conk-la-ree! song all day long. Females stay lower, skulking through vegetation for food and quietly weaving together their remarkable nests. In winter Red-winged Blackbirds gather in huge flocks to eat grains with other blackbird species and starlings. Look for Red-winged Blackbirds in fresh and saltwater marshes, along watercourses, water hazards on golf courses, and wet roadsides, as well as drier meadows and old fields. In winter, you can find them at crop fields, feedlots, and pastures.

MEADOWLARK

The Western Meadowlark is the size of a robin but chunkier and shorter-tailed, with a flat head, long, slender bill, and a round-shouldered posture that nearly conceals its neck. The wings are rounded and short for the bird's size and the tail is short, stiff, and spiky. Western Meadowlarks have yellow underparts with intricately patterned brown, black and buff upperparts. A black "V" crosses the bright yellow breast; it is gray in winter. Contrasting stripes of dark brown and light buff mark the head. The outer tail feathers flash white in flight. Look for Western Meadowlarks foraging on the ground alone or, in winter, in small, loose flocks. When flushed, Western



Meadowlarks fly low, wings below the horizontal, gliding and flapping with short, stiff, quail-like wingbeats. In spring and summer, males sing out from atop fence posts, bushes, power lines, and other high points. Western Meadowlarks seek the wide open spaces of native grasslands and agricultural fields for spring and summer breeding and winter foraging.

BLUE JAY

Large crested songbird with broad, rounded tail. Blue Jays are smaller than crows, larger than robins. White or light gray underneath, various shades of blue, black, and white above. Blue Jays make a large variety of calls that carry long distances.

Most calls produced while the jay is perched within a tree. Usually flies across open areas silently, especially during migration.

Stuffs food items in throat pouch to cache elsewhere; when eating, holds a seed or nut in feet and pecks it open. Blue Jays are birds of forest edges. A favorite food is acorns, and they are often found near oaks, in forests, woodlots, towns, cities, parks.



AMERICAN MAGPIE

Black-billed Magpies are slightly larger than jays with much longer, diamond-shaped tails and heavier bills. In flight, their wings seem to be too short to support their graceful flight. These birds are black and white overall with blue-green iridescent flashes in the wing and tail. The upperparts are mostly black with a white patch in the outer wing and two white stripes

(“backpack straps”) on the back.

Black-billed Magpies are social, inquisitive birds that eat fruits, grains, insects, small animals, and frequently gather in large flocks at carrion.

Magpies move in groups and give a variety of trill, cackle, and whistle calls.



DESERT HORNED LARK

Look carefully at a bare, brown field, especially in winter, and you may be surprised to see it crawling with little brown shapes. When they turn, you may see a neat yellow face, black mask, and tiny black “horns” waving in the breeze. Horned Larks are widespread songbirds of fields, deserts, and tundra, where they forage for seeds and insects, and sing a high, tinkling song.

Horned Larks inhabit an extensive elevation range, from sea level to an altitude of 13,000 feet. Linnaeus named this bird *Alauda alpestris*:



“lark of the mountains” (it has since been moved to the genus *Eremophila*). Female Horned Larks often collect “pavings”—pebbles, clods, corncobs, dung—which they place beside their nests, covering soil excavated from the nest cavity.

The “paved” area resembles a sort of walkway, though the birds don’t seem to use it that way. While nobody fully understands the function of these pavings, they may help prevent collected nesting material from blowing away while the nest is under construction.

EASTERN KINGBIRD

The Eastern Kingbird is a sturdy, medium-sized songbird with a large head, upright posture, square-tipped tail, and a relatively short, straight bill. Eastern Kingbirds are blackish above and white below. The head is a darker black than the wings and back, and the black tail has a conspicuous white tip. Eastern Kingbirds often perch in the open atop trees or along utility lines or fences. They fly with very shallow, rowing wingbeats and a raised head, usually accompanied by metallic, sputtering calls. Eastern Kingbirds are visual hunters, sallying out from perches to snatch flying insects.

Eastern Kingbirds breed in open habitats such as yards, fields, pastures, grasslands, or wetlands, and are especially abundant in open places along forest edges or water.

They spend winters in forests of South America.



NIGHTHAWK

On warm summer evenings, Common Nighthawks roam the skies over treetops, grasslands, and cities. In the dim half-light, these long-winged birds fly in graceful loops, flashing white patches out past the bend of each wing as they chase insects. Their young are so well camouflaged that they're hard to find, and even the adults seem to vanish as soon as they land. On summer evenings, keep an eye and an ear out for the male Common Nighthawk's dramatic "booming" display flight. Flying at a height slightly above the treetops, he abruptly dives for the ground. As he peels out of his dive (sometimes just a few meters from the ground) he flexes his wings downward, and the air rushing across his wingtips makes a deep booming or whooshing sound, as if a racecar has just passed by.

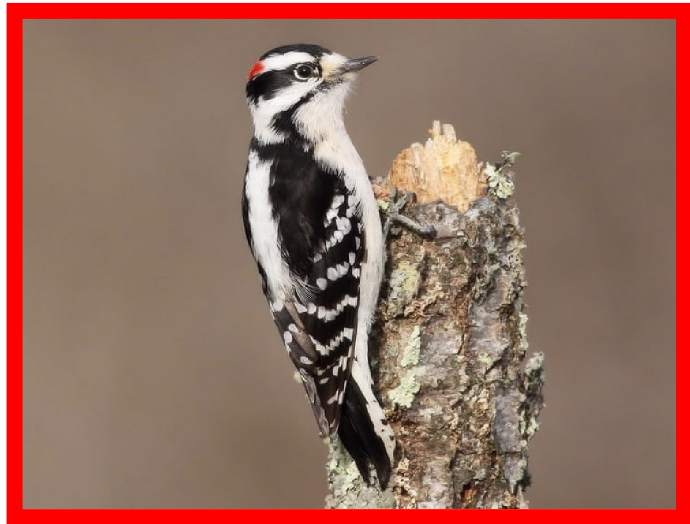


DOWNY WOODPECKER

Downy Woodpeckers are small versions of the classic woodpecker body plan. They have a straight, chisel-like bill, blocky head, wide shoulders, and straight-backed posture as they lean away from tree limbs and onto their tail feathers.

The bill tends to look smaller for the bird's size than in other woodpeckers.

Downy Woodpeckers give a checkered black-and-white impression. The black upperparts are checked with white on the wings, the head is boldly striped, and the back has a broad white stripe down the center.



Males have a small red patch on the back of the head. The outer tail feathers are typically white with a few black spots. Downy Woodpeckers hitch around tree limbs and trunks or drop into tall weeds to feed on galls, moving more acrobatically than larger woodpeckers. Their rising-and-falling flight style is distinctive of many woodpeckers. In spring and summer, Downy Woodpeckers make lots of noise, both with their shrill whinnying call and by drumming on trees.

BELTED KINGFISHER

Belted Kingfishers are stocky, large-headed birds with a shaggy crest on the top and back of the head and a straight, thick, pointed bill. Their legs are short and their tails are medium length and square-tipped. These kingfishers are blue-gray above with fine, white spotting on the wings and tail. The underparts are white with a broad, blue breast band. Females also have a broad rusty band on their bellies. Juveniles show irregular rusty spotting in the breast band. Belted Kingfishers spend much of their time perched along the edges of streams, lakes, and estuaries, searching for small fish. They also fly quickly up and down rivers and shorelines giving loud rattling calls. They hunt either by plunging directly from a perch, or by hovering over the water, bill downward, before diving after a fish they've spotted.



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

Yellow-billed Cuckoos are slender, long-tailed birds that manage to stay well hidden in deciduous woodlands. They usually sit stock still, even hunching their shoulders to conceal their crisp white underparts, as they hunt for large caterpillars. Bold white spots on the tail's underside are often the most visible feature on a shaded perch. Fortunately, their drawn-out, knocking call is very distinctive. Yellow-billed Cuckoos are fairly common in the East but have become rare in the West in the last half-century. Yellow-billed Cuckoos are among the few bird species able to eat hairy caterpillars. In the East they eat large numbers of tent caterpillars—as many as 100 in one sitting. Yellow-Billed Cuckoos don't lay their eggs all at once: the period between one egg to the next can stretch to as long as five days.



BARN OWL

These medium-sized owls have long, rounded wings and short tails, which combine with a buoyant, loping flight to give them a distinctive flight style. The legs are long and the head is smoothly rounded, without ear tufts. Barn Owls are pale overall with dark eyes. They have a mix of buff and gray on the head, back, and upper wings, and are white on the face, body, and underwings. When seen at night they can appear all white.



Barn Owls nest and roost in cavities, abandoned barns and other buildings, and dense trees.

At night, Barn Owls hunt by

flying low, back and forth over open habitats, searching for small rodents primarily by sound. Barn Owls require large areas of open land over which to hunt.

This can either be marsh, grasslands, or mixed agricultural fields. For nesting and roosting, they prefer quiet cavities, either in trees or man-made structures such as barns or silos.

SPARROW HAWK

We have few more beautiful Hawks in the United States than this active little species, and I am sure, none half so abundant.

It is found in every district from Louisiana to Maine, as well as from the Atlantic shores to the western regions.

Every one knows the Sparrow-Hawk, the very mention of its name never fails to bring to mind some anecdote connected with its

habits, and, as it commits no depredations on poultry, few disturb it, so that the natural increase of the species experiences no check from man.

During the winter months especially it may be seen in the Southern States about every old field, orchard, barn-yard, or kitchen-garden, but seldom indeed in the interior of the forest.



AMERICAN OSPREY

Ospreys are very large, distinctively shaped hawks. Despite their size, their bodies are slender, with long, narrow wings and long legs. Ospreys fly with a marked kink in their wings, making an M-shape when seen from below. Ospreys are brown above and white below, and overall they are whiter than most raptors. From below, the wings are mostly white with a prominent dark patch at the wrists. The head is white with a broad brown stripe through the eye. Juveniles have white spots on the back and buffy shading on the breast. Ospreys



search for fish by flying on steady wingbeats and bowed wings or circling high in the sky over relatively shallow water. They often hover briefly before diving, feet first, to grab a fish. You can often clearly see an Osprey's catch in its talons as the bird carries it back to a nest or perch.

STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE

Steller's Sea-eagles breed on the Kamchatka peninsula, the coastal area around the Sea of Okhotsk, the lower reaches of the Amur river (south to the Gorin river) and on northern Sakhalin and Shantar, Russia.

A few hundred winter in Kamchatka, the northern Sea of Japan, and the coast of Okhotsk, but most winter in the southern Kuril Islands and Hokkaido, Japan. It is an uncommon winter visitor to north-eastern China, North Korea and South Korea.

The fall migration typically commences in October with birds arriving in Japan in November. Adults return to their breeding territories in March and April while juveniles remain on the wintering grounds until May and sometimes June.

The Steller's Sea-eagle feeds primarily on fish, especially salmonids, taken alive or dead.



About the Author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.

As a wrangler on the “Great American Horse Drive”, at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, “The Oldest Greenhorn”, chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the “Gate-to-Gate” trophy belt buckle the hard way.



Other books by Larry W Jones include:

A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox
The Painting Of A Dream
The Boy With Green Thumbs and The Wild Tree Man
Red Cloud – Chief Of the Sioux
Spotted Tail – The Orphan Negotiator
Little Crow – The Fur Trapper's Patron
Chief Gall – The Strategist
Crazy Horse – The Vision Quest Warrior
Sitting Bull - The Powder River Power
Rain-In-The-Face – The Setting Sun Brave
Two Strike – The Lakota Club Fighter
Chief American Horse – The Oglala Councilor
Chief Dull Knife – The Sharp-Witted Cheyenne
Chief Joseph – Retreat From Grande Ronde
The Oregon Trail Orphans
Up and Over – A Hike In The Rockies

All his publications are available on Lulu.com.